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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000867

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TAGS: [KISL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [BG](#) [BG](#) [JI](#)

SUBJECT: CONTRASTING LOCAL VIEWS ON DR. GHALIB

REF: DHAKA 866

Classified By: A/DCM D.C. McCullough, Reason(s): 1.4 (b)

1. (SBU) Summary: Ahle Hadith Andolan Amir Assadullah Ghalib remains in prison while Ahle Hadith supporters claim his innocence, state their movement is non-political, is not a terrorist organization, and has no ties with JMB. Ghalib's proponents say his arrest was politically motivated, possibly by a jealous JI who want to control the millions of Ahle Hadith supporters and votes, or simply because the BDG needed a scapegoat for terrorist attacks. End Summary.

DR GHALIB ARRESTED

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2. (SBU) On February 23, 2005, the BDG, in the wake of terrorist bombings of several NGOs, announced a ban on both the Jamaatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) and its sister group, the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB). The BDG arrested Dr. Muhammed Asadullah Al Ghalib for his alleged complicity in these attacks and charged him with ten crimes including abduction, murder, bombings and robbery. Since that time, four of the charges have been dropped but he remains in jail in Bogra, which is located 150 kilometers north-west of Dhaka.

3. (SBU) Ghalib was the Chair of the Arabic Department at Rajshahi University, and the Amir of Ahle Hadith Andolan of Rajshahi, which is 200 kilometers west of Dhaka. On February 6, Poloff visited Ahle Hadith's complex and spoke to acting Amir Muhammed Muslehuddin, editor of Ahle Hadith's monthly newsletter Dr. Shakhawat Hussain, and other Ahle Hadith senior officers.

WHAT IS AHLE HADITH?

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4. (C) Muslehuddin responded that Ahle Hadith Andolan believes that, "You should follow Allah and the prophet Muhammed, only." They cited the last verse of the Prophet as saying "one will never be misguided in following only God's words and his actions." He said that this means it is "not acceptable to have new innovations in religious matters."

5. (C) Poloff asked whether politics is a integral part of Islam. Muslehuddin and others responded that this was an idea introduced by Jamaat Islami (JI) but refuted by Ghalib in his book, "The Three Principles," where he criticized Islam's religious basis for political action. "Ahle Hadith does not agree with that idea," Muslehuddin said. Asked if they agreed that Jamaat Islami, as a political party, has promoted Shariah law for Bangladesh, they disagreed, saying that JI has not passed a single bill in Parliament on Shariah law. Asked for an example, they agreed that the first law they or JI should enact would be to compel the Salah requiring all Muslims to pray.

6. (C) When poloff asked how, given that they eschew politics, would they bring Shariah law to Bangladesh, they said, "through preaching." If they were able, they would focus on eliminating "false hadiths", they said. All Shariah law, they emphasized, would be voluntary through a campaign of "public relations" and that such renewal and reform are equated with Ghalib.

7. (C) Asked about their funding, they said they no longer receive funds from abroad such as from the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS). They complained that given the close association that Kuwait has with the U.S. it is not possible for any Kuwaiti organization to be supporting terrorism now. Nevertheless, funding stopped eight months ago "leaving 800 orphans without support," Muslehuddin said.

IS DR. GHALIB A TERRORIST?

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8. (C) Muslehuddin and others repeatedly said that the charges against Ghalib were not true, and stressed that Ghalib has written against terrorism. In response to poloff's question why Ghalib was arrested by the BDG, they responded that "the status of Ghalib caused jealousy" from others, and because of the acts by Bangla Bhai and others, Ghalib was arrested as a "scapegoat."

19. (C) Muslehuddin said that the BDG told him privately "that Ghalib is not guilty but they can't release him." He blamed international pressure for Ghalib's arrest and asked for Embassy's assistance with the Home Ministry to release Ghalib.

110. (C) Asked about other possible motivations for the BDG to arrest and hold an innocent man, they claimed that while Ahle Hadith is not political, they represent some 13 million believers who vote. They accused JI and BNP of wanting Ahle Hadith leaderless in order to control those votes for themselves.

WHAT ABOUT JMB?
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111. (C) Asked about reported relationships between Ahle Hadith and JMB, Muslehuddin denied that Ahle Hadith had or has any relationship with Bangla Bhai and JMB, saying that "we stand against JMB." The Amir and others complained that their second in command, Dr. Abus Samad Salifi, was also arrested for assisting in placing bomb materials. They bitterly protested this arrest saying, that he was a 70-year-old man and "he can not be imagined doing such things." They also complained that they are learned men and should be treated with respect; they should not have to share cells with other inmates.

112. (C) Muslehuddin said that people are against JMB, whom he described as mostly "excited teenagers." Yes, it is true that Bangla Bhai is a former Ahle Hadith, and there are others in JMB who are also former Ahle Hadiths, but "he and JMB are misguided," he said.

OTHER VIEWS ON DR. GHALIB
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113. (C) Abdul Haq, Ghalib's replacement as Chair in the Arabic Department, told poloff that after working with Ghalib for 25 years, he believes that Ghalib was "innocent." He said that when Ghalib was arrested by police on February 23, 2005, he and several other faculty members went to the police station and argued for Ghalib's release.

114. (C) Deputy Inspector General of Police Bahurul Alam told poloff, "I don't believe that Ghalib is guilty of actual involvement" in any bombings, but he might have contributed "theoretical" support. Awami League Sreepur Union Chairman Moqbal Hossain (the mayor of the lowest level of elected government) told poloff that given the deteriorating law and order situation, when JMB first took action against the leftist criminals, many people, even the police supported JMB. It was only natural that "Ghalib and his followers cooperated with them," he said. He added that the people responsible for the emergence and support of JMB are four Rajshahi-based BNP politicians and not Ghalib.
CHAMMAS